

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A method to produce a perforated web material, wherein the web material ~~(1)~~ is fed through a nip ~~(11)~~ between a first roller ~~(7)~~ and a second roller ~~(9)~~ rotating in opposite directions and pressed against each other, the first roller ~~(7)~~ being provided with protuberances ~~(7P)~~ for perforation, **characterized in that** the web material is preheated
5 before being fed into said nip, and the web is fed into the nip in a preheated condition at a temperature higher than the ambient temperature.

2. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that at least one of said first and second roller ~~(7, 9)~~ is heated.

3. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 1 ~~or 2~~, characterized in that said first and said second roller rotate with a different peripheral speed to each other.

4. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 3, characterized in that said first roller ~~(7)~~ rotates at a higher peripheral speed than said second roller ~~(9)~~.

5. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in ~~one or more of the previous claims~~ claim
1, characterized in that said web material is a nonwoven fabric.

6. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 5, characterized by:

- producing at least a web of fibres~~(V)~~;
- bonding said fibres to form a nonwoven fabric;
- feeding the preheated nonwoven fabric into said nip~~(11)~~.

7. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 6, characterized in that said web ~~(V)~~ is produced and bonded in series upstream of said nip.

8. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in claim ~~6 or 7~~, characterized by the phases of:

- producing at least a web of unbonded fibres~~(V)~~;
- feeding said web of unbonded fibres~~(V)~~ through at least a heating and bonding station to bond said fibres and form a nonwoven fabric;
- feeding the nonwoven fabric preheated in said at least a heating and bonding station into said nip~~(11)~~.

9. (Previously Presented) Method as claimed in claim 8, characterized in that heating and bonding are performed using an air-through system.

10. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in ~~one or more of the claims from 6 to 9~~ claim 6, characterized in that the nonwoven fabric is fed into said nip with an input speed equal to or lower than the peripheral speed of the first roller~~(7)~~.

11. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 12, characterized in that said second roller~~(9)~~ is rotated at a peripheral speed lower than or equal to the peripheral speed of said first roller.

12. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 10~~or 11~~, characterized in that the feed speed of the nonwoven fabric into said nip is between 90% and 100% of the peripheral speed of the first roller~~(7)~~.

13. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 12, characterized in that the feed speed of the nonwoven fabric into said nip is between 90% and 110% of the peripheral speed of the second roller~~(9)~~.

14. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 12~~or 13~~, characterized in that the peripheral speed of the second roller~~(9)~~ is between 50% and 100% of the peripheral speed of the first roller~~(7)~~.

15. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 5, characterized by the phases of:

- producing at least a web of unbonded fibres~~(V)~~;
- feeding said web of unbonded fibres to a heating station~~(3)~~;
- feeding the web of fibres preheated in said heating station into said nip~~(11)~~;
- bonding the fibres to form the nonwoven fabric and perforating the web of fibres

in said nip~~(11)~~.

16. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 15, characterized in that the web of unbonded fibres~~(V)~~ is fed into said nip with an input speed lower than the peripheral speed of the first roller~~(7)~~, said peripheral speed of the first roller being equal to or higher than the peripheral speed of the second roller~~(9)~~.

17. (Previously Presented) Method as claimed in claim 16, characterized in that a delivery speed equal to or higher than the peripheral speed of the first roller is imparted to the web material delivered from said nip.

18. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 16~~or 17~~, characterized in that the feed speed of the web of fibres into said nip is between 50% and 90% of the peripheral speed of the first roller.

19. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in ~~one or more of the claims from 5 to 18~~ claim 5, characterized in that two or more web of fibres~~(V1, V2)~~ are coupled and joined together.

20. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in claim 19, characterized by: forming at least a first and a second web of unbonded fibres~~(V1, V2)~~; joining said first and said second

web together and consolidating said fibres in said heating station.

21. (Previously Presented) Method as claimed in claim 19, characterized by:

- forming at least a first and a second web of unbonded fibres; feeding said first and second web of unbonded fibres to one or two heating and bonding stations for preheating and separately bonding the fibres of the first and of the second web to form two nonwoven fabrics;
- feeding said two preheated nonwoven fabrics into said nip;
- perforating and joining together said two nonwoven fabrics in said nip.

22. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in ~~one or more of the claims from 5 to 21~~ claim 5, characterized in that said web material comprises bicomponent fibres.

23. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in ~~one or more of the claims from 5 to 23~~ claim 5, characterized in that a plastic film (Fp) is combined with said nonwoven fabric or with said web of unconsolidated fibres.

24. (Currently Amended) Method as claimed in ~~one or more of the claims from 1 to 5~~ claim 1, characterized in that said web material comprises at least a plastic film (Fp).

25. (Currently Amended) A production line to produce a perforated web material,

comprising at least a path to feed a web material (~~V, V1, V2, Fp~~) to a perforation station (~~7~~,
9) comprising a first roller (~~7~~) and a second roller (~~9~~) rotating in opposite directions and pressed
against each other, defining a nip (~~11~~) through which the web material is fed; the first roller (~~7~~)
5 being provided with protuberances (~~7P~~) for perforation; characterized in that a heating station
(~~3~~) is provided upstream of said perforation station, through which said feed path passes and
in which the web material is preheated before being fed to said perforation station, said heating
station and said perforation station being arranged such that the web enters said perforation
station in a preheated condition at a temperature higher than the ambient temperature.

26. (Currently Amended) Production line as claimed in claim 25, characterized in that
at least one of the rollers of the perforation station is heated.

27. (Currently Amended) Production line as claimed in claim 25 ~~or 26~~, characterized in
that the two rollers of the perforation station are controlled so that they rotate at different
peripheral speeds from each other.

28. (Currently Amended) Production line as claimed in claim 27, characterized in that
said first roller (~~7~~) rotates at a peripheral speed higher than the peripheral speed of said second
roller (~~9~~).

29. (Currently Amended) Production line as claimed in ~~one or more of the claims from~~

~~25 to 28~~ claim 25, characterized in that bonding devices are provided along said feed path to bond the fibres of a web of unbonded fibres and form a nonwoven fabric, which is fed to said perforation station.

30. (Previously Presented) Production line as claimed in claim 29, characterized in that said bonding devices comprise a bonding system of the air-through type.

31. (Currently Amended) Production line as claimed in ~~one or more of the claims from 25 to 30~~ claim 25, characterized in that it comprises at least a machine (~~1, 1A, 1B~~) to produce a web of fibres (~~V, V1, V2~~).

32. (Currently Amended) Production line as claimed in ~~one or more of the claims from 25 to 30~~ claim 25, characterized in that it comprises joining devices to join together two or more layers destined to form said web material.

33. (Previously Presented) Production line as claimed in claim 32, characterized in that said joining devices comprise means to consolidate two webs of fibres to each other.

34. (Currently Amended) Production line as claimed in ~~one or more of the claims from 25 to 33~~ claim 25, characterized in that it comprises two feed paths for at least two components destined to form said web material, said two feed paths uniting before passing through said

perforation station.